

Lyle D. Jaffe
Dockets Management
FDA/DHHS
12420 Parklawn Dr.
Room 1-23
Rockville, MD 20857

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Dear Mr. Jaffe:

I've just recently learned of some of the parameters surrounding the issue of "forced molting" of layer hens, and I must say it seems this forced molting business not only leads to disgustingly unhealthy threats to the health of humans who eat the "force molt" eggs, but it evidently seems to be exceedingly nasty and cruel to the hens themselves who are forced into this most unnatural and painful situation. Indeed, forced molting has even been banned in Great Britain!

As I also understand, most European countries will *not* allow food deprivation (a major inducement to forced molting) of hens for more than 24 hours. In our country we allow hens to be deprived of food *and* water for two weeks or more! I've seen photos of these poor birds and it's a sad sight to see. They hardly even look like chickens anymore!

I certainly don't spend my time thinking about chickens all day, but their treatment sounds downright cruel and uncivilized. I've also had the dubious pleasure to discover how horridly and painfully cooped up most hens are during their short lives on America's chicken farms. It seems to me someone ought to legally require America's egg farmers to ease up on their sordid exploitation of their chickens.

Just because these creatures provide food for millions and millions of people everyday doesn't mean we they have to let farmers have free reign to virtually beat the ever living crap out of them in order to squeeze a few extra cents out of each and every one of them. What is more, I've also made the grim discovery that since only females produce eggs, 280 million male chicks per year are stuffed into plastic bags and left to suffocate or be crushed to death! Again, it seems to me the chicken industry ought to be forced to clean up its barbaric act.

Despite the prevailing calloused attitude that chickens are just a bunch of dumb, goofy, unfeeling creatures, we must face the real (perhaps hard to swallow) truth that these animals are sentient beings that experience pain, fear, desperation, and terror every bit as much as any other animal and undoubtedly similarly to we humans, for that matter. Certainly when you prick them they bleed like us, and if you hurt them they cry out like us, and if scared or threatened they try to get away or fight like us. Indeed, it's made me stop eating chicken for good. It's simply too much pain for too little gain.

In any event, I don't expect everybody to stop eating chicken just because I did. But on the other hand we can all begin to wake up to the fact that blatant, unbridled cruelty to these poor birds can and should be substantially reduced simply by taking measures such as supporting the petition to ban the forced molting of layer hens (docket 98P-0203/CP). Considering all the meals these animals have provided and continue to provide we humans, it's the least we can do for them.

I thank you for your time and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

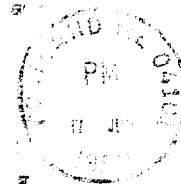
Bob Sullivan

Bob Sullivan
474 Montsweag Rd.
Woolwich, ME 04579

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Sullivan
474 Montsweag Rd
Woolwich, ME 04579



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